No More Drama
Getting Everyone on the Bus

Anthony Muhammad, PhD
Public School Purpose

- All children have the **right** to have their gifts and talents cultivated through the process of education.

- All children **can** learn and become educated.

(Cuban & Tyack, 1995)
What is a PLC?

“A Professional Learning Community is a group of educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research in order to achieve better results for the students they serve. PLC’s operate under the assumption that the **key** to improved learning for **students** is continuous, job-embedded learning for **educators**”

DuFour, et. al, 2006
What’s Next?
Is Change Necessary?

“Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.”

—Albert Einstein
Two Forms of Change

• Technical—structural (skill)

• Cultural (will)
Will and Skill

Culture

Pedagogy
High Will and High Skill

- High Will and Low Skill
- High Skill and Low Will
- Low Skill and Low Will
- High Will and High Skill

Diagram showing the combinations of high and low will and skill.
School Culture

“School culture is the set of norms, values, and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and stories that make up the ‘persona’ of the school.”

—Deal & Peterson, 2002
Leadership at Every Level

- Teacher
- Healthy School Culture
- Building Leadership
- District Leadership
- State and Federal
Two Important Subcultures: Managerial and Collegial
Healthy School Culture

“Educators have an unwavering belief in the ability of all of their students to achieve success, and they pass that belief on to others in overt and covert ways. Educators create policies and procedures and adopt practices that support their belief in the ability of every student.”

—Kent D. Peterson in Cromwell, 2002
Prescriptive

Commitment
- Belief in all students
- School goals guide behavior.

Reflection
- Analyze data
- Confront brutal facts.

Prescription
- Collaborative
- Disciplined practice
Toxic School Culture

“Educators believe that student success is based on students’ level of concern, attentiveness, prior knowledge, and willingness to comply with the demands of the school, and they articulate that belief in overt and covert ways. Educators create policies and procedures and adopt practices that support their belief in the impossibility of universal achievement.”

—Kent D. Peterson in Cromwell, 2002
Descriptive and Deflective
Frustration
The Root of a Toxic Culture

*Frustration:* A feeling of anxiety as a result of the inability to perform a task

- A mismatch between skill set and task
- Causes people to deflect blame onto others and create covert alliances with people experiencing similar struggle
Recipe for Disaster

• Inappropriate preparation
• Poor support system
• Task overload
## Creating Healthy Cultures: A Two-Way Street

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collegial</th>
<th>Managerial</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Control the language of the informal organization.</td>
<td>• Develop and maintain healthy organizational vision.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Remove emotional tone (culture of complaint) from informal interactions.</td>
<td>• Develop and maintain healthy policies, practices, and procedures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Focus peers on mission and problem solving.</td>
<td>• Institutionalize organizational health.</td>
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Real Difference

Healthy Culture

Problem solvers

Toxic Culture

Complainers
Good to Great
(Jim Collins)

What do great corporations or organizations do differently than good or average organizations?

• Seek and confront the brutal facts.
• Get the right people on the bus in the right seats.

(Collins, 2001)
Adult Drama

Dysfunctional social interactions between adult professionals within a school environment that interfere with the proper implementation of important policies, practices, and procedures that support the proper education of students.
The Quandary

(Tweeners)

(Fundamentalists)

(Believers)

(Survivors)

(Muhammad, 2009)
# The Real Difference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Believers</strong></th>
<th><strong>Fundamentalists</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal: Every student shall succeed.</td>
<td>Goal: Maintain the status quo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept that change (the right change) is necessary to improve student performance.</td>
<td>Reject any substantive change if it clashes with personal agenda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe student interest is more important than personal interest (public servant).</td>
<td>Believe self-interest is more important than student interest (self-servant).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Current State of School Reform

- Fundamentalists (need for stability, predictability)
- School Improvement (need to change to meet organizational goals)

The Clash

Stalemate
Can fundamentalism be reversed?
Fundamentalist:
Change is not easy

“Drop Your Tools” Research

- People persist when they are given no clear reason to change.
- People persist when they do not trust the person who tells them to change.
- People persist when they view the alternative as more frightening.
- To change may mean admitting failure.

(Maclean, 1992)
How Do We Respond?

• **Level 1**—Make a clear case for change. (Communication)

• **Level 2**—Develop relationships; do not ostracize. (Build Trust)

• **Level 3**—Increase capacity and consider the context. (Build Skill)

• **Level 4**—Monitor strongly. (Accountability)
Healthy Cultures

Support

Accountability
Purpose

“The best case for public education has always been that it is a common good. Everyone ultimately has a stake in the caliber of schools, and education is everyone’s business.”

—Fullan, 2003
Let Us Not Forget!

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government ....”

—U.S. Declaration of Independence
It’s Not About Us!
It’s About Them!
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